

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 KUALA 04822 01 OF 02 230857Z

21

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-13 SAJ-01 AF-08 ACDA-07 AID-05 TRSE-00

OMB-01 MMO-01 (ISO) W
----- 092803

P R 230330Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4335

INFM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

USLO PEKING

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 KUALA LUMPUR 4822

NOFORN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MPOL XB SP UR MY

SUBJ: MALAYSIAN PERCEPTIONS OF SOVIET MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE
PACIFIC

REF: (A) STATE 187556, (B) KUALA LUMPUR 4608, (C) KL 4346

1. SUMMARY. MALAYSIAN LEADERS ARE GENERALLY AWARE OF THE SOVIET
NAVAL PRESENCE IN THE PACIFIC AND INDIAN OCEANS BUT DO NOT PERCEIVE
THIS AS DIRECTLY THREATENING THE COUNTRY'S SECURITY. THEY DO,
HOWEVER, FEAR RECENT RUSSIAN EFFORTS TO INCREASE THE SOVIET
PRESENCE AND INFLUENCE HERE BECAUSE THIS MIGHT STIMULATE CHINA TO
MATERIALLY ASSIST MALAYSIA'S COMMUNIST INSURGENTS. THEY ALSO ARE
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 KUALA 04822 01 OF 02 230857Z

CONCERNED THAT RIVALRY BETWEEN RUSSIA AND CHINA MIGHT RESULT

IN SOVIET ENCOURAGEMENT FOR AN INTERVENTIONIST VIETNAMESE POLICY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. A REAL, BUT LESSER, CONCERN IS POSSIBLE SOVIET SUBVERSION OF DOMESTIC POLITICAL GROUPS, MAINLY MALAY, WHO OPPOSE THE GOVERNMENT FROM THE LEFT AND THE RIGHT. THE GOM HAS SOUGHT TO INSULATE MALAYSIA FROM THE EFFECTS OF GREAT POWER RIVALRY THROUGH SUPPORT FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED "NEUTRALIZED ZONES." IN LINE WITH THIS POLICY, THE GOM HAS PUBLICLY OPPOSED EXPANSION OF U.S. FACILITIES ON DIEGO GARCIA AND CALLED FOR EVENTUAL WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. FORCES FROM THE PHILIPPINES, EVEN THOUGH SENIOR OFFICIALS HAVE PRIVATELY WELCOMED A U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE REGION AND MALAYSIA HAS SOLICITED AND ACCEPTED MODEST AMOUNTS OF FMS CREDITS AND MILITARY GRANT TRAINING. THIS SEEMING CONTRADICTION RESULTS FROM A BELIEF THAT MALAYSIA MUST CONTINUOUSLY SEEK TO PLACATE CHINA AND VIETNAM BECAUSE GOM LEADERS KNOW THEIR FORCES CANNOT DEFEND THE COUNTRY FROM AN INDIRECT OR DIRECT ATTACK FROM EITHER COMMUNIST NEIGHBOR. WE BELIEVE THAT THE GOM WILL CONTINUE TO REJECT ENTANGLEMENTS THAT MIGHT DRAW PRC REACTION, WHICH AT THIS TIME MEANS AVOIDING AN INCREASED SOVIET PRESENCE WITHIN THE COUNTRY. THE SOVIET NAVAL PRESENCE IN THE REGION DOES NOT SEEM TO HAVE ENTERED INTO THEIR PRESENT CALCULATIONS, ALTHOUGH SOME MFA OFFICIALS HAVE INDICATED THEY THINK A REDUCTION IN THE U.S. PRESENCE MIGHT CAUSE THE USSR TO DO LIKEWISE. END SUMMARY.

2. MALAYSIAN REACTIONS TO THE USSR, PARTICULARLY AS THESE RELATE TO THE POTENTIAL THREAT THAT SOVIET ACTIVISM IN MALAYSIA MIGHT TRIGGER A CHINESE RESPONSE OR MIGHT RESULT IN SUPPORT BY VIETNAM FOR LOCAL COMMUNIST INSURGENCIES, WERE RECENTLY REPORTED IN REFTELS B AND C. THIS MESSAGE SHOULD BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE TWO OTHER CABLES TO GET A FULLER PERSPECTIVE.

3. IF HE THINKS ABOUT THE USSR AT ALL, THE AVERAGE MALAYSIAN DOES SO IN TERMS OF HIS ETHNIC, RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND. MALAY PEASANTS AND FARMERS, FOR EXAMPLE, ARE NOT LIKELY TO CRITICIZE THE SOVIET POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEM BECAUSE THEY THEMSELVES ARE NOT YET FULLY WEDDED EITHER TO PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY OR TO CAPITALISM. FURTHERMORE,

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 KUALA 04822 01 OF 02 230857Z

THEY ARE ONLY CONFUSED BY REPORTS OF SOVIET SUPPORT FOR PALESTINIANS AND ARABS (GOOD) AND SUPPRESSION OF ISLAM WITHIN ITS BORDERS (BAD). THE GENERALLY BETTER EDUCATED CHINESE WORKER, A READER OF NEWSPAPERS, DISLIKES THE RUSSIANS BECAUSE HE KNOWS FROM THE PRO-PRC CHINESE LANGUAGE PRESS THAT THE USSR IS A THREAT NOT ONLY TO WORLD PEACE BUT PARTICULARLY TO THE PRC. THE INDIAN, ON THE OTHER HAND, ESPECIALLY IF HE IS A HINDU, PROBABLY HAS A FAVORABLE FEELING TOWARD MOSCOW BECAUSE

OF THE LATTER'S FRIENDSHIP WITH NEW DELHI. ON BALANCE, THEREFORE, ABOUT A THIRD OF THE POPULATION (CHINESE) IS DISPOSED AGAINST RUSSIA, THE INDIAN TEN PERCENT PROBABLY FAVORS IT, WHILE THE MALAY HALF HAS MIXED VIEWS. IN ADDITION, A SMALL, RADICAL GROUP OF LEFT-WING INTELLECTUALS, LARGELY MALAYS BUT INCLUDING INDIANS AND CHINESE, WOULD HAVE NO QUALMS ABOUT TAKING RUSSIAN ASSISTANCE WHILE A TINY RIGHT-WING GROUP OF MALAYS WOULD ALSO ACCEPT SOVIET MONEY BECAUSE OF GREED, DISLIKE OF CHINA AND, FOR SOME, RELIGIOUS ZEAL THAT IMPELLS THEM TO FAVOR A VAGUE BUT PURITANICAL ISLAMIC SOCIALISM A LA LIBYA.

4. THE WESTERN INFLUENCED AND OFTEN WESTERN EDUCATED ELITE FAVOR THE U.S. AND THE WEST WHILE FEARING THE SOVIETS BECAUSE THEY FAVOR DEMOCRACY AND ARE ORIENTED TOWARDS FREE ENTERPRISE. BUT ONLY THOSE WITH INSIGHTS INTO MALAYSIAN FOREIGN POLICY AND SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS, NOT A LARGE GROUP BECAUSE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S TENDENCY TO WITHHOLD THE DETAILS OF POLICY PROBLEMS FROM THE PEOPLE, HAVE FULLY FORMED PREJUDICES AGAINST THE USSR. THESE PREJUDICES ARE NOT BASED ON PERCEPTIONS OF A SOVIET NAVAL THREAT, BUT ON THE BELIEF THAT IF THE RUSSIAN CAMEL GETS HIS NOSE ANY FURTHER UNDER THE EDGE OF THE MALAYSIAN TENT HE WILL BE ABLE TO SUBORN SIGNIFICANT ELEMENTS IN THE SOVIETY AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, ALL HIS ACTIVITIES TAKEN TOGETHER WILL EXCITE THE NEARBY CHINESE TIGER, WHICH UNTIL NOW HAS NOT FULLY FOCUSED ITS ATTENTION ON MALAYSIA. EVIDENCE OF THIS ATTITUDE CAN BE FOUND IN THE RECENT GOM DECISION TO REJECT SOVIET OFFERS TO COMPLETE A HYDROELECTRIC DAM PROJECT AND OTHER GOM EFFORTS TO CURB THE RATHER SMALL RUSSIAN PRESENCE HERE WITHOUT OPENLY CONFRONTING THE USSR OR SEEMING TO VIOLATE MALAYSIA'S NON-ALIGNED STANCE (SEE REFTELS B AND C).

SECRET

NNN

SECRET

PAGE 01 KUALA 04822 02 OF 02 230621Z

16

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-13 SAJ-01 ACDA-07 AID-05 TRSE-00 OMB-01

MMO-01 AF-08 (ISO) W

----- 092758

P R 230330Z AUG 76
FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4336
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY
AMEMBASSY RANGOON
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
USLO PEKING

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 KUALA LUMPUR 4822

NOFORN

5. ALTHOUGH REPORTS ARE RECEIVED FROM ITS EMBASSY IN MOSCOW ON A REGULAR BASIS, THE GOM DOES NOT HAVE ANY SIGNIFICANT CAPABILITY FOR CONTINUING ANALYSIS OF SOVIET GEOPOLITICAL MOVES. THE DECISION TO REJECT SOVIET ASSISTANCE FOR THE TEMBELING DAM APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN TAKEN ON THE BASIS OF A STUDY PREPARED BY MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, POLICE SPECIAL BRANCH AND DEFENSE MINISTRY OFFICIALS ASSEMBLED IN AN AD HOC GROUPING UNDER NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL DIRECTION BUT THIS GROUP IS NOT PERMANENT AND, FROM WHAT WE CAN DETERMINE, SOVIET NAVAL EXPANSION WAS NOT CONSIDERED DURING THE DELIBERATIONS. KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE LATTER IS IMPARTED TO INTERESTED GROUPS THROUGH THE LOCAL PRESS -- ENGLISH, MALAY AND CHINESE -- WHICH DEPENDS
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 KUALA 04822 02 OF 02 230621Z

HEAVILY ON FOREIGN WIRE SERVICE REPORTS, PRINCIPALLY FROM U.S. AND BRITISH NEWS AGENCIES. THE NATIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE DAILY "NEW STRAITS TIMES," FOR EXAMPLE, CARRIES AP AND UPI REPORTS AS WELL AS SELECTED FEATURE ARTICLES FROM THE "NEW YORK TIMES" AND OFNS. ASIAN EDITIONS OF TIME, NEWSWEEK, THE FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW, AND NOW, ASIAWEEK, ALSO ARE WIDELY READ BY EDUCATED MALAYSIANS. THEREFORE, THEY KNOW ABOUT THE RUSSIAN PRESENCE AS IT RELATES TO U.S. INTERESTS BUT THERE IS SOME SKEPTICISM ABOUT U.S. CHARGES OF RUSSIAN BASES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AND SOVIET NAVAL EXPANSION BECAUSE AMERICAN JOURNALS HAVE ACCUSED THE DEFENSE DEPT OF EXAGGERATING THE RUSSIAN THREAT AT APPROPRIATION TIME.

6. AS DESCRIBED IN PAST CABLES, MALAYSIA'S NON-ALIGNMENT IS THE RESULT OF ITS LEADERS AWARENESS THAT NEITHER BRITAIN NOR ANY OF THE OTHER WESTERN POWERS WILL EVER AGAIN COME TO MALAYSIA'S AID AS THE COMMONWEALTH DID DURING

THE 1948-60 COMMUNIST INSURGENCY AND THE CONFRONTATION WITH
INDONESIA IN 1963-65. ACUTELY CONSCIOUS THAT THEY HAVE
NO CAPABILITY OF DEFENDING THEIR COUNTRY -- OR AT LEAST THE

MALAY PENINSULA -- FROM DIRECT OR INDIRECT ATTACK BY CHINA
OR VIETNAM, GOM LEADERS PRESSURED THEIR ASEAN ALLIES TO JOIN
IN THE KUALA LUMPUR DECLARATION (1970) PROPOSING A ZONE
OF PEACE, FREEDOM, AND NEUTRALITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA IN HOPES
OF INSULATING THE REGION FROM THE BYPRODUCTS OF RIVALRY
BETWEEN THE GREAT POWERS. SIMILARLY, THEY HAVE STRONGLY
BACKED THE PROPOSED INDIAN OCEAN PEACE ZONE TO PROTECT THEIR
OTHER FLANK AND HAVE WELCOMED THE PROPOSED NUCLEAR FREE ZONE
IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC. WHILE PRIVATELY INDICATING THAT IT MAY
IN TEN OR TWENTY YEARS TO ACHIEVE THE ZPFN, AND WHILE PRIVATELY
EXPRESSING THEIR DESIRE FOR SOME SORT OF U.S. PRESENCE IN THE
REGION, GOM SPOKESMAN HAVE PUBLICLY CALLED FOR REMOVAL OF
FOREIGN BASIS FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA AND OPPOSED U.S. EXPANSION
ON DIEGO GARCIA. THAT THEY CAN DO SO WHILE QUIETLY ACCEPTING
U.S. MILITARY SALES CREDITS AND A SMALL GRANT MILITARY
TRAINING PROGRAM IS ALL TO THE GOOD FROM THEIR POINT OF VIEW.
THEY LIKE THE U.S. AND BASICLY TRUST WASHINGTON NOT TO
TAKE ACTIONS WHICH ARE DAMAGING TO MALAYSIA. BUT THEIR
MAIN CONCERN IS ELSEWHERE, AND, UNLESS THE NEW PRIME
MINISTER DICTATES A WHOLLY NEW FOREIGN POLICY, THE DESIRE
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 KUALA 04822 02 OF 02 230621Z

TO PLACATE CHINA AND VIETNAM IS LIKELY TO OVERRIDE THE
GOOD FEELING FOR THE U.S. SHOULD OUR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP
SEEM TO THREATEN TO IRRITATE RELATIONS WITH THE TWO
COMMUNIST STATES, JUST AS SOVIET ATTEMPTS TO BECOME MORE
INFLUENTIAL HERE SEEM TO THREATEN TO DO SO.

7. LOOKED AT FROM THE GOM'S POINT OF VIEW, AND WITH THE FALL
OF SOUTH VIETNAM FRESH IN MALAYSIAN MEMORIES, THE NEXT
FIVE YEARS WOULD SEEM TO CALL FOR A CONTINUATION OF THE SAME
BALANCING ACT. IF CHINESE OR VIETNAMESE POLICY TOWARD
SOUTHEAST ASIA CHANGES, HOWEVER, THEN A NEW STRATEGY WILL
HAVE TO BE EVOLVED. THE NEED FOR ASSISTANCE MIGHT
RESULT IN A REJECTION OF NON-ALIGNMENT, EVEN THOUGH THE
SITUATION SEEMED HOPELESS. THE PRESENCE OF RUSSIAN NAVAL
SUPPORT MIGHT THEN SEEM WELCOME. IN THE MEANTIME, MOST
MALAYSIAN POLICY MAKERS CONSIDER THE RUSSIAN NAVY TO BE A
THREAT ONLY AS IT BEARS ON CHINA'S ATTITUDE TOWARD SOUTHEAST
ASIA. WHILE NOT THREATENING, IT CLEARLY ANNOYS PEKING,
THEREFORE IT WOULD BE GOOD IF IT WERE REDUCED. FOLLOWING THAT
LINE OF THOUGHT, SEVERAL FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS HAVE
INDICATED THAT THEY FAVOR A REDUCED U.S. NAVAL PRESENCE IN
THE INDIAN OCEAN IN ORDER TO AVOID STIMULATING FURTHER
SOVIET INCREASES.
UNDERHILL

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS, FORCE & TROOP LEVELS, MILITARY PLANS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 AUG 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976KUALA04822
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760321-0901
From: KUALA LUMPUR
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760829/aaaaazdb.tel
Line Count: 277
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 STATE 187556, 76 KUALA LUMPUR 4608
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 MAY 2004 by ElyME>; APPROVED <11 MAY 2004 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MALAYSIAN PERCEPTIONS OF SOVIET MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE PACIFIC
TAGS: MPOL, PINR, MORG, XB, SP, UR, MY
To: STATE BANGKOK
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006